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Fitness is Social For Senior

Undertaking aerobic exercise in a group really does work better than doing it alone, because it is just plain more fun.

That attitude has worked well for Jean Shuler for the past 40 years

Now 70, Shuler still keeps running and climbing mountains with co-workers from the **Livermore National Laboratory** (LLNL). She returned from Mount Whitney a few weeks ago, after her fourth climb of the mountain with three friends.

“We started at 9PM with headlights, and hiked all night. Our goal was to get to the top by sunrise. We missed it by a little bit,” said Schuler.

Shuler had her choice of the “I climbed Mt. Whitney” T-shirts from the shop there. The old shirts tell the world that the mountain’s elevation is 14,497 feet. However, thanks to a recalculation, there is now an updated t-shirt showing 14,508 feet. It adds luster to the accomplishment.

Shuler has hiked Half Dome at Yosemite a few times, also with co-workers. This year she worked in support of the annual Western States 100 ultra marathon race, which begins at Lake Tahoe and ends in Auburn.

Although she did not run in the race, she had a challenging workout on crew duty with about 10 other people. Standing in wet-suits, waist-high in the American River, the crew took turns, two hours in the water and two hours out to warm up.

They helped put up a cable that the runners could grab for stability as they ran across the river, which had been lowered by a dam upstream.

“Debbie Santa Maria, who works at the Lab, was with me. We had been running for years at the Lab. Ken Skulina was there, too. The race was exciting. They set three course record; top female, top male and top master’s male,” said Shuler.

Shuler has won some competitions, too, in her age group in three half-marathons (13.1) miles), this year. Victories came in Pleasanton and Sun Valley, Idaho. She was proudest of winning at Badger Cove, at Lake Delle Valle, where the rain was pouring down on the race.

Shuler stays in shape by running 4 or 5 miles at lunch at the Lab with a few other dedicated folks. They like to run 9 or 10 miles on Sundays through Sycamore Grove park. Practicing yoga daily and swimming a mile also helps keep her fit.

Another fitness program for her is Active for Life, which is a competition among the national laboratories. Employees in the program receive points for exercising. “The idea is for people to be more healthy,” said Shuler.

One interesting challenge in the program is geo-catching. Log books are hidden at some Valley location, such as Pleasanton Ridge and lake Del Valle. People learn the coordinates and run or hike there, dig out the log book, and sign it. Their reward is another point in the program.

Shuler and her husband moved to Livermore for his Lab job in 1968. However she was not hired for a job at LLNL at that time, because the Lab’s nepotism policy barred spouses. That changed in 1972, and Shuler started working at the Lab.

Shuler is a deputy division leader in the computer computations directorate, which includes a couple hundred people. She works with Cray supercomputers, famed for their speed, and their inclusion in the filming at the Lab of a scene for the Disney movie “Tron”.

Asked how she feels about her long dedication to exercising with friends, Shuler replied, “Fit and happy.”